



Faith Savill <faith.savill@magfest.org>

Concern about timeline for newly elected members

5 messages

Debra Lenik <debra.lenik@magfest.org>

Mon, Jul 13, 2020 at 7:17 PM

To: bod <bod@magfest.org>

Cc: employees@magfest.org

Hi BoD,

At a meeting this afternoon with myself, Faith, and Emily, PB shared that you guys had voted to bring the candidates recommended by the staff election into board channels/meetings beginning August 1, with an eventual official vote to add them to the board happening sometime in November. He explained that this 4-month timeline was in line with previous additions to the board, and was meant to minimize concerns about difficulty/length of onboarding new members.

Given the accelerated timeline for making a decision about Super MAGFest, I think it's actually very vital that Shir & Josiah be brought on board as soon as possible, provided you have no other concerns about their candidacy and intend to bring them on as recommended by the election committee.

1. Since the next (tentative) board meeting is July 29, it feels intentionally exclusive not to bring them on until August 1. Even if it isn't, I suspect it will be a bad look with the staff.
2. If the recommended candidates were less involved, I could see the argument behind waiting, but Josiah is essentially second-in-command of our staff, and Shir is one of very few people in MAGFest leadership with experience on another non-profit board (not to mention they've worked to sunset another convention). I feel they both bring invaluable perspectives to the upcoming conversations, even if they're not dissenting opinions/votes.
3. I don't see any advantage in waiting other than a concern about having sufficient time to onboard them--and I think this could be addressed by sharing our most relevant working documents, asking them to catch up on their own time, and then setting a single session for any catchup questions before the next meeting.
4. I think the comparison to timeline for previous new members is a bit erroneous. I may be misremembering this, but I believe Jack/Joel were unofficially voted on in August 2019 and officially voted on in October 2019 (two months). Again I could be wrong but to my recollection, they were added to channels/folders/lists, able to start attending meetings and participating in votes unofficially, and otherwise acted in a board capacity virtually immediately.

Yes, there is a lot going on right now, and I appreciate the instinct to want to reduce new variables in such a chaotic time. I know that more voices in the room doesn't necessarily equal a better outcome, but I count us very fortunate that the staff voted in two such experienced and talented candidates, and I think it would be both a bad optics decision and a bad business decision not to include them as soon as possible.

Thank you,
Debra

Debra Lenik
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schedule a meeting with me: <https://calendly.com/debra-lenik>
my pronouns are she, her, hers. [learn more](#)

Faith Savill <faith.savill@magfest.org>

Mon, Jul 13, 2020 at 10:36 PM

Cc: bod <bod@magfest.org>, employees@magfest.org

Hi all -

I'd also planned to send something but Deb summarized most of my thoughts really well (thanks Deb!) I don't have the experience of having been through a previous election, so of course I can't speak to protocols or how BoD members have

been brought on in the past. As the person who oversees staffing, I want to advocate for Shir and Josiah to have a seat at the table at the proposed late-July meeting, even if they do not have official BoD votes.

While multiple candidates mentioned the issue in their questionnaire, both Shir and Josiah emphasized in their platform/campaign that helping MAGFest to weather the storm and pivot from in-person events was a priority for them. [Questionnaire linked if helpful](#). I know folks vote for a number of reasons/motivations, but I imagine that their stances on this issue played a role in their winning seats on the BoD. I don't think it is a stretch to say that folks voted for Shir and Josiah purely *because* they want them to be a part of this conversation.

Both Shir and Josiah are long-time, extremely dedicated staffers, and I believe their involvement in this meeting is important because a.) I genuinely think they will positively contribute to the conversation and subsequent decision, and b.) I think the optics of excluding them is more of a burden than the work that it might take to spin them up. Both are capable and motivated; I believe that if you assign them the task of reading through whatever notes or documents you have worked on since March, they will do so even if it means extra work for them.

Thanks for considering my thoughts on this - I do not envy the work you're doing and I genuinely appreciate all that you are currently and will be doing to get Shir and Josiah prepared for service on the board.

Faith

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Faith Savill
Director of Volunteer Infrastructure
MAGFest, Inc.
faith@magfest.org
[Quoted text hidden]

Jack Boyd <jack@magfest.org>

Tue, Jul 14, 2020 at 8:00 AM

To: Faith Savill <faith.savill@magfest.org>, Debra Lenik <debra.lenik@magfest.org>

Cc: bod <bod@magfest.org>, employees@magfest.org

Debra and Faith,

Thank you for bringing this to our attention. You are definitely correct about our miscalculation on time, Debra. In the July 2019 meeting with the board, it was discussed that Joel and I might be asked if we wanted to join the board. It was actually August 3rd that I received word for considerations of being added to the Board. I confirmed that I would accept if the board decided to add me. I was then tasked with talking to each board member to help the board make a decision to add me or not. This was probably about 30-40 hours total of talking total between board members in that short span. Possibly more.

On August 16th, 2019, I was unofficially added to the Board. It was confirmed that I would have access to materials, but I would not have a vote until I was added officially to the Board.

Joel was not added to the Board meetings until September 22. This could have been because I was more familiar with the board members at that time, timing, or even them focusing on me first and talking through everything.

With Bunny, it took over a month for her to be added to the mailing lists and longer to be added officially to the Board, even though she had been attending board meetings as advisor to the board for years. Some of the reason for this was to focus on adding us officially during the public board meeting all at once, but mostly, the delay was to not only allow the board time to ensure we would be a good fit, but also allow Joel, Bunny, and myself the time to ensure we were making the right decision for ourselves.

At no point did I feel my voice wasn't heard in this training period and I will say that it is my opinion that Joel and I were delayed being added to the Board to make adding us as seamlessly as possible since jumping head first into large issues the board had worked on for months would have delayed and complicated the board's decisions at the time.

After considerations, we have decided not to move forward with inviting the newly selected candidates to board meetings prior to August for a multitude of reasons that outweigh the benefits of adding them sooner. Depending on what happens in the organization, we will consider adding Josiah and Shir in one-three months instead of four.

What I'd personally be happy to do is to start including Josiah and Shir in many of my communications with board members and I'd also be happy to start training them now. On my own time, I'd start talking about where the board is now and start preparing them to join if they are willing/want to do so.

We appreciate you both bringing this forward and I will correct ourselves on the poor calculations of the time period of Joel and I joining the board in all communications we've had. I'd also be happy to discuss this further with anyone if they are available and want to anytime this week (I will reschedule anything except Thursday night from 8-10 p.m. EDT).

Thanks,
Jack Boyd
President, Board of Directors
MAGFest, Inc.

www.magfest.org

[Quoted text hidden]

Faith Savill <faith.savill@magfest.org>

Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 11:07 AM

To: bod <bod@magfest.org>

Cc: employees@magfest.org

Hi Jack and BoD -

Thanks so much for getting back to us about this. I have to admit that the quickness of your response, though appreciated, made me feel as if there was no discussion to be had. And maybe that's the truth of it, but I would like to respond anyway.

While I truly and genuinely appreciate the time you took to look into all of these dates and timelines, the explanations of timing sound like an excuse. In all that I have read through, there is no protocol that dictates how long a person must wait after being elected before being invited to meetings, or at what point they will be voted in. If these processes exist in writing, please let me know (I would also love for that type of thing to be in Notion if so). If they do not exist, they should - in the future, staffers/volunteers should be aware of the process before they run for an elected seat or vote.

When you mention that for Bunny, "it took over a month for her to be added to the mailing lists and longer to be added officially to the Board, even though she had been attending board meetings as advisor to the board for years." - I understand that is something of a precedent set, and while some amount of admin work is involved, it's not insurmountable. I regularly create email groups and accounts for people - I think it's unfair to paint those tasks as taking a long time. Also, just because something was done in this way in the past is no reason to continue that practice, especially in a time when staff voices need to be heard above our own. Without our staff, there is no MAGFest. Even if MAGFest no longer has the funding to pay employees, or changes their way of doing business and events completely, there will still be a community of volunteers who will make something amazing happen. Shir and Josiah represent those folks, and I don't think I'm being dramatic to say this might be the most important time (in recent years at least) for them to have a say (not a vote, a say).

I know (and please know I appreciate it, everyone is SO busy and the world is pretty stressful and awful atm) that BoD members have already been meeting with them and that is awesome. In your own experience, you noted that "at no point did I feel my voice wasn't heard in this training period" - that's great, and I am grateful you felt heard by the other members of the BoD - that's literally how it should be. However, I can almost guarantee you that Josiah and Shir (and by that token, many of the staff they represent) will feel that their voices are not heard. They will feel that way because their voices will literally not be heard at the 7/29 meeting.

Again, I know I have no power over the board or your decision-making, but I do have a responsibility to our staff. While I've worked closely with Shir and Josiah, I would advocate for anyone that won the election to be added to meetings - especially ones that may change the course of our work permanently - immediately. Thanks again for reading and for considering -

Faith

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Faith Savill <faith.savill@magfest.org>
To: Josiah Tillett <josiah.tillett@magfest.org>

Thu, Jul 16, 2020 at 4:47 PM

I guess just FYO

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